



GOVERNOR'S REMARKS

Monday, 03/26/2007 2:15 pm

Governor Discusses the Importance of Central Valley Water Storage

GOVERNOR: Thank you very much for the nice introduction, and it's great to be here today. And thank you all for coming. It's great to be here with so many elected officials, local leaders, and experts in water storage.

The Friant Dam and Millerton Lake Reservoir is a place that we chose to do this press conference here today because we are in desperate need to have more above the ground water storage, and we want to make sure that we put the spotlight on this issue. This is an issue that I promised the people of California, it's an issue that I have promised the people in the Valley, to make sure that we get more above the ground water storage.

This is absolutely essential for the state of California, because we need more water storage because of the increased population. In the next 20 years our population is going to grow by 30 percent. That is an equivalent of adding 3 cities the size of Los Angeles to California.

Earthquakes and major storms are also a major problem that we have here. We are very vulnerable. It could damage the Delta, and threaten the water supply for 25 million Californians. That is two-thirds of all Californians are threatened to have their water supply cut off if we have a major earthquake or a huge, major storm. Global climate change, as you have just heard earlier, will reduce snowpack. That means more floods in the winter and less drinking water in the summer. Rising sea levels could contaminate the Delta with saltwater. So those are all the kinds of problems and threats that we are facing.

Last year we tried very hard to get more water storage, and we failed. This is not a complaint, because I proposed 68 billion dollars in infrastructure bonds, and out of that 68 billion dollars we got 37 billion dollars, including Highway 99, which was 1 billion dollars for that great project. So we accomplished so much, and the legislature accomplished so much last year, but you know, you can't always get everything. And last year I said "I'll be back," so this year we are back, and we are going to talk about it again, because it is important.

My plan is a comprehensive water solution for California.

- I have proposed 5.95 billion dollars in bonds for water management, 4.5 billion dollars for water storage. Likely sites are the west side of the Sacramento Valley and Intemperance Flat on the San Joaquin River east of Fresno. It would supply 500,000 acre feet of water, which is enough for 1 million households, so think about the amount here.
- Then 1 billion for Delta sustainability, to protect that valuable and vulnerable area, follows my executive order to develop a sustainable plan;
- 250 million dollars for restoration projects, including the Klamath, the San Joaquin, and the Sacramento Rivers, the Salton Sea and the Delta;

- Then 200 million dollars for water conservation grants for local communities.

So this is a very important, this package, and I just want to urge everyone to do as much as you can in order to let the legislature know that this is very important for California. All the local leaders, all the business leaders, all the farmers, all the people, let them know. Because in Sacramento, I can guarantee you, the squeaky wheels get the grease, so those that make the most noise will get the attention. So let's all work together to make sure that this year we pass this bond measure of 5.9 billion dollars so we have, once and for all, something that gives us more water storage.

This is one of those issues that has needed to be addressed, I would say, for a long period of time here in California, and it's one of those issues that hasn't been addressed. So I always promised that I would dig out those very important issues from under the rug, if it is prison reform, or if it is rebuilding California through the infrastructure, if it is creating health care for everyone, or if it is creating more above the ground water storage.

So thank you very much, and now I would like to introduce Senator Cogdill, who is an expert in this subject. (Applause)

SENATOR COGDILL: Thank you, Governor, and good morning. We are certainly pleased that all of you took time to come out this morning to talk about an issue that's so very, very important to this state, and to each and every one of us that are here.

It's really an honor for me to have authored SB 59, which is the bill that incorporates all of the Governor's ideas relating to water storage and other areas that we need to enhance our water system throughout this state. And I want to take just a quick minute to acknowledge a couple of folks that are here that are co-authors of this important legislation. We have with us today Assemblywoman Kathleen Galgiani, and Assemblyman Bill Maze, who are standing behind me. Those are two of the co-authors. Yes, please, give them a quick hand. (Applause)

And I also wanted to take a minute to acknowledge Assembly Member Juan Arambula, who I guess couldn't make it with us here today, but he's also a co-author on the legislation, as well as Assembly Leader Mike Villines, who also couldn't be here today.

Again, I don't think we can overstate the importance of this legislation. As the Governor has mentioned, this has been a long, long time coming, and those of us who represent this area and live in this valley in this great state know how important water is to our economy and to our future. And the Governor has certainly stepped forward in realizing the changes that we know are coming, and what is happening in our hydrology in this state, and what we know the growth trends are, to say we are way behind the 8 ball right now. We need to get out ahead of this curve, to get this question before the people of this great state and to allow them to have an opportunity to wade into the debate and to make the decisions that they'll need to make relating to the water that we'll all need in the future.

And it's very, very encouraging, again, that we have an administration that for the first time in many decades now has been willing to stand up and say, "This is important, and I'm going to put the whole strength of my office behind it to see to it that we move the debate forward." So we certainly want to, again, mention all the hard work that the Governor and the administration have made in this effort. But it really only starts with the Governor and the legislature. You're the ones that will have to take this message back to the people of the state of California and help us as we try to move this debate forward so we really can make the decisions we need to provide the 21st century water project that we want to see to provide the need for our children and our grandchildren in this great state.

At this point I would like to introduce someone who can give you some of his own personal feelings and

interactions relating to this critical need right here, very close to this project, and that's Mayor Victor Lopez of Orange Cove. Mayor? (Applause)

MAYOR LOPEZ: Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to say that as the mayor of the City of Orange Cove, it is an honor I mean a great honor I finally, after 30 years, made history, being here with the Governor of the State of California. I am honored, deeply honored, Governor. And with all the elected officials that are here behind me, I believe that they're very special. Why are they special? Because they were chosen by their respective communities to be leaders. And this morning, they're showing leadership by being here, being leaders for their respective communities, and I would love to give them a great applause for being leaders, as people expect us to be, to lead. And that's what they're doing this morning, they're leading, because we need water. We need water for what? For the future of our children, the future of our grandchildren. We must care.

And probably more important, to preserve and to protect the food basket of the world. Yes, we are the food basket of the world, the San Joaquin Valley. We feed the world, and that must mean something to everybody. Everybody should join hands together with us, from the north to the south, from the west to the east, and make sure that together, as a family, we say we are going to build Temperance Flat, we are going to support Senator Cogdill with SB 59. That is very important. And we're talking about other locations, other dams, but this is the one, the main artery of our valley, to secure that the valley and the state of California has a future.

Yes, we will care about the environmentalists. Of course we will. And we believe with this project that everybody will benefit. This is not only for the farmer. Well, you know what? The farmers are the ones that feed the world, and we need to applaud them, support them, and be there with them as we are today. Now, we're talking about economy. We're talking the economy of the communities. Like the Governor said in one important meeting when I was there, he said, "Mayor Lopez, when the Valley prospers, the whole state of California prospers." Yes, Mr. Governor, you're right. The whole state and the nation and the world. Yes, it is so essential and so important.

Governor, you are superb. You are a leader, and you are a true champion, and I'm here to tell you that I'm happy to be here standing with you. And I want to be called your friend, the friend of the people, because this is not about party affiliation. This has nothing to do with Democrat and Republican. This issue is about water for people water for people. And that's our economy, and this is our backbone. Everybody benefits, from the farmer to the business to the farm worker. And I am a champion for farm workers, and I want to thank the Governor for being there for the farm workers. And I want to thank everybody in support. I know Mario Santoyo and all the individuals from the Central Valley Project work diligently to make sure that we protect our future. So believe me, what I'm talking about it that this is the future of California, the future of this state, and the future of this nation. So stand with us. We will succeed, and we will be victorious, because we're going to work with every legislator to convince them that this is one of the most important issues in this world. So thank you, and God bless you. (Applause)

GOVERNOR: Now, the next time, could you put a little bit more energy in this, please? I love it when people are passionate about things. I think this is really terrific. Thank you very much. And this is exactly how we all feel.

Any questions about this, please? Yes? We have a microphone.

Q: Governor, how do you answer the opponents of the Temperance Flat Dam, those who say money should be spent on recycling programs or on efforts to expand our current facilities?

GOVERNOR: Well, as you know and I think the Mayor said it perfectly we respect the environmental community, respect those that are fighting for causes to clean the environment and all this, but we don't always see eye to eye on those issues. And I think that it is very important when you're the governor that you fight for all of those things; that you fight for ground storage, water storage, you fight to conserve water, you fight for all of those

different things.

But we need, as part of this whole thing, we need desperately above the ground water storage. And so we're going to go through that with the legislature and with Democrats and Republicans. And as you have heard, it's not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. When you drink water there is no Democratic water or Republican water. It's just water. When the farmers have water for farming, as you have heard earlier I have been around the world. I have seen California products in China, I have seen California agriculture products and produce in Japan and in Mexico, and in other places where I have traveled. It makes me feel proud to see that we are feeding the world. But we need the water, and I think, as I have said earlier, with the changes in global warming we are more desperate to get the above the ground storage than every before.

Q: Governor, what kind of opposition do you think you'll have in the legislature?

GOVERNOR: Well, you know, all of those things are always a fight. You know that now when we redo our health care system and fix the broken system, it's a lot of negotiations, it's bringing people together, bringing the stakeholders together. And I think the important thing is that we work together, not fight but work together, and just work through all of the difficult moments and get it done. We are very fortunate that we have a legislature right now in Sacramento that is willing to work together, even though maybe out there you will hear different stories, and they will be saying things. But the fact is, I know that they're willing to work together, they're willing to fix the problems. Because this is a great opportunity, you know, to go now and to look at things that have not been addressed for decades, like health care, like transportation infrastructure, like building more schools, like creating above the ground water storage and all of those things. Those things were not addressed, or they were addressed and then just again were not accomplished. Now we want to accomplish those things. The people of California deserve it.

Q: Governor, a question.

GOVERNOR: Yes?

Q: Additionally to the water saving project, what are your next steps in saving the environment, global climate change, you just mentioned it, and how do you work with the federal government?

GOVERNOR: Well, the important thing is that we show leadership on a statewide level, and that we start bringing in other states to become our partners. We have now formed, with the western states, a partnership. We have formed with the northeastern states a partnership. We have formed partnerships now with some of the states, the provinces, in Canada. We have formed a partnership with Tony Blair, with Great Britain. There are all kinds of partnership. And I think eventually the federal government will also get it, that they'll go and join that fight and to fight global warming.

Q: Governor, a question over here. Could you come to the Valley more often? Just kidding. I love your passion too, by the way, okay?

GOVERNOR: Thank you very much. Thank you. Don't give up your day job.

Q: I come from where you come from, my friend. No, a question. I spoke with Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez recently about Temperance Flat, and he posed the question, he said, "So, John, why should I buy water from Temperance Flat at an elevated price when I can get it somewhere else for less?" So he was against more water storage. That's one of the debates you're going to be dealing with when you deal with the legislature. How are you going to respond to that?

GOVERNOR: We're going to respond that we need more water storage. We need it for the farmers, we need it

for the people. As a matter of fact, we all know that supply and demand, when we don't have enough supply, then it drives up the price, so we want to provide more supply. And we know that just recently we had to release a lot of water here because we couldn't hold it; otherwise it would overflow. Well, that water, that was an equivalent of providing water for millions of households, went out into the ocean, wasted. It's gone. What we want to do is, we want to capture that water, and we want to be ready at any time there is a drought to have the water storage available for that. That is basically the bottom line. We are trying to protect the millions and millions of people that need the water, that rely on the water, and the endless amount of farmers that rely on it. So we are going to fight for that. We're going to get it this year.

Q: Governor, Senator Perata recently almost ruled out pursuing this state money for dams. You mentioned the importance of negotiations. What is it that you think you can give Senator Perata to get him to come along on dams?

GOVERNOR: I was very happy last year when Senator Perata and I were in the Valley talking about Highway 99 and how we are going to go and provide that billion dollars to fix Highway 99. And there he got a question from the press about above the ground water storage, and he said, "I recognize that we need more above the ground storage, and we're going to look at it in a serious way." So I think that's all you need, is for someone to look at it in a serious way and to be open-minded. And that's up to us, then, to create the action in Sacramento. So I think we're going to work together and we're going to get it done.

Thank you very much. Thank you.